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DAWN

Sunday
January 4, 2026
Rajab 14, 1447

KARACHI

Rs 50.00
34 Pages
Vol. LXXX No. 4
Regd. No. SS-022

www.dawn.com

US grabs Maduro in outrageous Venezuela raid

• Trump hails overnight 'large-scale' operation that took president and his wife into custody • Couple indicted on drug and weapon charges • Washington will 'govern Venezuela until transition takes place' • Allies and foes alarmed • Caracas calls for resistance, demands emergency UNSC meeting

SMOKE billows over Caracas after the US operation which led to capture of the Venezuelan president.—AFP

WASHINGTON: The US attacked Venezuela and captured its long-serving President Nicolas Maduro in an overnight operation on Saturday, President Donald Trump said, in Washington's most direct intervention in Latin America since the 1989 invasion of Panama.

"This was one of the most stunning, effective and powerful displays of American might and competence in American history," Trump said at a press conference at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, where he was flanked by senior officials, including Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Trump said Maduro was in custody and that American officials would take control of Venezuela.

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"We're going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition," he said.

"We can't take a chance that someone else takes over Venezuela who doesn't have the interests of Venezuelans in mind."

In a Truth Social post earlier in the day, Trump wrote: "The United States of America has successfully carried out a large-scale strike against Venezuela and its leader, President Nicolas Maduro, who has been, along with his wife, captured and flown out of the country."

He added that "this operation was done in conjunction with US law enforcement".

Speaking at the press conference, Trump said: "All Venezuelan military capacities were rendered powerless as the men and women of the US military, working with law enforcement, successfully captured Maduro in the dead of night."

Moreover, he said that the US military caused a blackout in Caracas to execute the operation to capture Maduro.

"It was dark. The lights of Caracas were largely turned off due to a certain expertise that we have," Trump said.

He added that the US is ready to launch a second and much larger wave of attacks if needed, adding that Washington assumed a second wave would be

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Khamenei dismisses Trump threat

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed on Saturday Tehran "will not yield" following US President Donald Trump's threat to aid protesters, while warning that domestic "rioters" must be "put in their place" amid swelling unrest over soaring inflation.

Speaking in a recorded television appearance marking a holiday, Ayatollah Khamenei addressed the mounting crisis facing Iran's leadership.

He adopted a dual approach to the demonstrations that have flared across more than two dozen cities since Sunday, acknowledging legitimate economic grievances while drawing a hard line against political dissent.

"We will speak with the protesters, but talking to rioters is useless," Khamenei said. "Rioters should be

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India promoting terrorism, regional instability: FO

• Rejects Jaishankar's 'irresponsible' remarks after 'bad neighbours' jibe • Says New Delhi trying to 'deflect attention' from its 'own troubling record' • Reiterates Pakistan's stance on Indus Waters Treaty

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Saturday said that India was promoting terrorism and contributing to regional instability as it rejected the "irresponsible assertions" made by Indian External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, noting that New Delhi was once again seeking to "deflect attention from its own troubling record as a neighbour".

Although the FO statement did not make a specific mention of the remarks by the Indian minister, its rebuke came after Indian media reported Dr Jaishankar as saying on Friday that New Delhi had a right to defend itself against terrorism while talking about "bad neighbours".

"You can also have bad neighbours … unfortunately, we do. When you have bad neighbours … if you look to the one to the West — if a country decides that they will deliberately, persistently, unrepentantly continue with terrorism, we have a right to defend our people against terrorism," he was quoted as saying by *The Hindu*.

He also spoke about the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), which has been a major bone of contention between the two countries following an attack on tourists in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam on April 22, blamed by India on Pakistan without evidence.

"Many years ago we agreed to a water-sharing arrangement — the belief was it was a gesture of goodwill — because of good neighbourliness we were doing it … but if you have decades of terrorism, there is no good neighbourliness and you don't get the benefit of good neighbourliness," he said.

"You can't say … 'Please share water with me but I will continue terrorism' — that's not reconcilable," he was quoted as saying by the publication.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the FO said: "Pakistan firmly rejects the irresponsible assertions made by the Indian external affairs minister. Once again, India seeks to deflect attention from its own troubling record as a neighbour that promotes terrorism and contributes to regional instability."

'Terrorism in Pakistan'

The FO added that India's "documented involvement in promoting terrorist activities in the region, particularly in Pakistan, is well known".

"The case of Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav remains a stark example of organised, state-sponsored terrorism directed against Pakistan."

Jadhav was captured in Balochistan in March 2016 and later confessed to his association with the Indian spy agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), as well as his involvement in espionage and

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Dar arrives in Beijing for strategic dialogue

BEIJING: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday arrived in Beijing to co-chair the seventh round of the Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, which is scheduled for Sunday (today), the Foreign Office (FO) announced in a post on X.

In an earlier statement, the FO said the foreign minister will be the "first foreign dignitary to visit China in 2026", at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, with whom he will co-chair the dialogue.

In the X post, the FO said Mr Dar was received at the airport by China's Special Representative on Afghanistan Ambassador Yue Xiaoyong, Pakistan's ambassador to China and officials from the Pakistani Embassy.

"[The] DPM/FM will also attend events marking the beginning of the 75th year of Pakistan-China diplomatic ties, with both countries planning initiatives and commemorative activities throughout 2026," the post added.

The FO has said that the dialogue "will review the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation, identify new areas of partnership, and further advance the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China".

Earlier this week, the

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Ex-PTI leaders plan MPC to ease political tensions

National Dialogue Committee to invite lawyers, intellectuals for talks

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leaders plan to convene a multi-party conference (MPC) in Islamabad next week in an attempt to reduce political tensions in the country.

The conference is being organised under the banner of a recently formed National Dialogue Committee (NDC) set up by ex-PTI leaders, including Fawad Chaudhry, Dr Shahzad Waseem and former Sindh governor Imran Ismail.

Organisers said the event would bring together political leaders as well as lawyers, intellectuals and technocrats from across the country.

Invitations will be sent to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), PTI, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI). The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Awami National Party (ANP) and other parties will also be invited.

The NDC will also extend a special invitation to Tehreek Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP). Fawad Chaudhry, Imran Ismail and Mahmood Moulvi, who formed the committee, have begun contacting political leaders to extend invitations.

The organisers said the conference aimed to explore a way out of the political crisis and build harmony among national political parties. Mr Chaudhry said that bringing together all schools of thought on national matters was "the need of the hour" and that the goal was to develop consensus on key political issues.

Last month, the group formally approached Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, seeking the release on parole of senior PTI figures detained in Kot Lakhpat Jail, arguing their participation was essential to make any dialogue process credible and productive.

In a letter sent to the prime minister on Dec 23, the committee welcomed PM Shehbaz's renewed offer of talks with the opposition, particularly PTI, and described it as a "golden opportunity" to stabilise the country amid deepening political, economic and institutional challenges.

Interestingly, the letter did not mention PTI founder Imran Khan, focusing

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KP CM's non-bailable warrants issued in cybercrime case

Civil judge describes non-compliance with orders as deliberate attempt to evade legal process

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad court on Saturday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi over his repeated absences in a case registered against him under the cybercrime law for allegedly making online remarks against state institutions.

Senior Civil Judge Abbas Shah observed that the CM had repeatedly ignored summons and remained absent from proceedings without any lawful justification. The court noted that despite being given multiple opportunities to present himself before the court and respond to the allegations, the accused failed to comply with judicial directions.

The court took a serious view of the persistent non-appearance and termed it a deliberate attempt to evade the legal process. Consequently, the judge ordered law enforcement authorities to ensure Mr Afridi's production before the court. Following the issuance of the arrest warrants, the court adjourned proceedings till January 17.

According to the case record, the matter stems from a complaint registered by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), which has booked the KP chief minister under various provisions of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca).

Besides the cybercrime case, Mr Afridi and his colleagues are facing proceedings in an anti-terrorism court for their alleged involvement in the Nov 26 protest in Islamabad.

The anti-terrorism court had initiated proclamation proceedings against them for repeatedly failing to appear before the court. The court had called upon CM Afridi, Meena Khan, Amjad Khan, Shafiullah Jan and Amjad Afridi to appear before it to face ongoing legal proceedings. In its order, the court had noted that the repeated absence of the defendants left it with "no option but to initiate proclamation proceedings," while granting them a final opportunity to surrender.

The notices had warned that failure to appear during the Section 87 proceedings would compel the court to proceed with further legal action in accordance with the law. The case is based on an FIR registered in connection with a November 26 protest, in

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SITUATIONER

Once bustling, Shershah now struggles for buyers

Soaring prices, easier alternatives, poor access have driven buyers away from Karachi's biggest used auto-parts market

By Aamir Shafaat Khan in Karachi

THE decades-old Shershah Market, the hub of imported used items, especially auto parts and engines, continues to face a dearth of consumers despite a surge in imports of used cars up to three years old and millions of vehicles already on the roads.

According to an importer, 40,000 imported used cars, mainly from Japan, landed in the country during the previous fiscal year, with 660cc vehicles making up 98 per cent. Around 18,000 more arrived in July-December 2025.

With more imported used cars on the roads, Shershah traders say footfall should have increased as owners search for axles, suspension and old engines. But market traders say they have been sitting idle as high prices of parts have been keeping buyers away from one of Asia's biggest and oldest markets, located close to Lyari and the old SITE industrial area of the port city.

Traders say the market's slowdown is being driven by a mix of factors like rising prices, easier alternatives in other markets and long-standing problems in access and basic facilities. These have pushed many buyers away from Shershah even as the number of used cars grows.

Why buyers go elsewhere

One of the reasons for the low turnout of buyers, traders said, is the availability of axles, suspension parts and shock absorbers in other small and medium-sized markets at lower prices. They say engines remain Shershah's core line, but for most other components, buyers can now shop elsewhere.

Another problem is the lack of parking on main roads and even inside the market, traders said. Damaged, narrow internal roads, which they say have not been repaired for decades, further restrict access.

Many consumers prefer buying axle- and suspension-related items from other markets, which they feel are hassle-free and appear cheaper than Shershah Market. Some axle and suspension dealers also pay visits to Dubai and Far East countries to directly import parts instead of procuring them from Shershah.

Traders and repairers say the differences become more obvious when comparing rates across markets. Consumers witness price disparity in axle, suspension and shock absorbers in different markets, which, they say, points to the presence of smuggled parts compared to duty-paid parts that cost more. Chinese parts are also present, they added.

Kabuli vs Chinese

A suspension and axle maker in F.B. Area said that "car owners mainly prefer Kabuli front axle to a Chinese-made one".

Kabuli parts, which refer to imported used parts regarded as higher quality, "are repairable due to their good quality even after usage for two to three years. Chinese parts lack satisfaction and are unable to be repaired. They can only be replaced", he said.

For example, a Chinese-made front axle boot pair for a Suzuki Alto 2004 (1,000cc) sells for Rs7,000-8,000, while traders at Plaza Market demand Rs4,000-5,000.

Chinese parts are a one-time risk, he said, as they cannot be repaired and need to be replaced with a new pair after developing a fault. He added that axle makers also provide a six-month guarantee, while others ask consumers to check performance within a week.

Engines still draw buyers

While traders say buyers have drifted to alternative markets for several parts, Shershah has traditionally been known as a centre for engines. But even this segment, traders say, has been hit by rising prices.

Mohammad Saeed, dealing specifically in small car engines, said a 660cc engine is available for not less than Rs150,000 versus

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ON OTHER PAGES

PIA sell-off challenged in LHC

A petition has been filed in the Lahore High Court challenging the recent privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines. The plea seeks to set aside the sale of the national carrier, describing it as illegal and unconstitutional. The Cabinet Committee on Privatisation had endorsed a Rs135bn bid from an Arif Habib Group-led consortium for a 75 per cent stake in the airline. **Page 3**

Chip shortage pushes up phone prices

The increasing use of AI, along with the impact of the global "chip war", is becoming evident even in local markets, as smartphones prices have started to rise. While Infinix and Techno have already announced higher rates, other brands, including Vgotel, Vivo, Realme, Oppo etc., plan to raise rates in the coming week. Manufactures say this is due to the high cost of chipsets. **Page 9**

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